

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

OFFICIALS TAKE DOWN GANG-AFFILIATED DRUG TRAFFICKERS; RECORD NUMBER OF GUNS SEIZED

Law enforcement officials have dismantled a drug-and-guns trafficking ring that involved members from 13 different gangs and resulted in what is believed to be the county's biggest single-day weapons seizure.

A coalition of local, state and federal agents have arrested more than three dozen people, most with gang affiliations or membership, and have seized 60 weapons at the culmination of the two-year investigation dubbed "Crystal Palace." That number includes 33 guns found during raids of homes and storage facilities in Spring Valley, Lomita Village, and Mira Mesa on October 2.

This is the latest in a series of large-scale multi-agency crackdowns on street gang activity in San Diego County neighborhoods. In addition to the Crystal Palace indictments, 119 defendants have been charged in various federal gang prosecutions since January, with 79 guilty pleas so far. Many sentences have ranged from 10 to 21 years in federal prison.

"These are neighborhoods and streets where children play and walk to school, parents push their strollers and citizens of every age seek to live peacefully and enjoy their families," said U.S. Attorney Laura Duffy. "We will not allow our neighborhoods to become headquarters for gun-toting gang members."

Those arrested include alleged gang members from Linda Vista, Spring Valley, Mira Mesa, Logan Heights, Lomita Village, Chula Vista, National City, and elsewhere. They are accused of trafficking in guns plus methamphetamine, heroin, ecstasy, marijuana and cocaine, according to grand-jury indictments and search warrant affidavits unsealed today.

“Through a collaborative effort with local law enforcement, we’ve succeeded in dismantling a dangerous gang-operated criminal enterprise in the heart of San Diego,” said Derek Benner, special agent in charge for ICE HSI. “Promoting public safety is at the core of our mission, and we remain committed to using our expertise and resources to protect our communities so the law-abiding residents will have a safe place to live, work and play.”

“The San Diego Police Department is proud of the cooperative relationships that we have with all the law enforcement agencies in the San Diego area. The time and effort spent on this operation was incredibly worthwhile because it resulted in getting guns, drugs and criminals off the streets and safer neighborhoods,” said San Diego Police Department Chief William Lansdowne.

This case was unique for the number and type of weapons seized, agents said. Among the guns found during raids: Numerous assault rifles, including Uzi submachine guns; AR-15 magazine-fed, semi-automatic rifles; antique shotguns and high-powered rifles, optics, laser sighting systems, silencers, and a law enforcement taser. They also found 4,000 rounds of ammunition, Kevlar body armor, \$34,000 in cash plus various quantities of drugs, including about 15 pounds of methamphetamines with an estimated street value of \$204,800.

Court records allege that defendants Norman Nooris, Tony Lomeli and Hao Duc Tang were operating drug importation and distribution cells, each of which trafficked in significant amounts of mostly methamphetamine and guns. Each of the cells is alleged to have significant gang ties.

One of the defendants, Veronica Ojeda, is accused of distributing large quantities of drugs out of her grandmother’s house, less than a block from an elementary school on San Vicente Street in the Lomita Village area of San Diego.

San Diego police have received 19 citizen complaints related to drug trafficking in 2012 in Lomita Village, around Ojeda’s residence and the surrounding area, which includes Tang’s home as well. Lomeli lived in the nearby Encanto neighborhood.

Four defendants were arraigned today in federal court, including Anthony Harvey, Jose Enrique Hernandez, Manuel Luzanilla-Machado and Daniel Anthony Quenga.

And, four detention hearings took place today also. U.S. Magistrate Judge Nita Stormes granted defendant David Ulloa’s request for \$100,000 bond; U.S. District Judge Karen S. Crawford ordered another defendant, Marco Antonio Hernandez, detained based on risk of flight and danger to the community; and two defendants, John Pross and Luis Vasquez, did not oppose the government’s request for detention.

DEFENDANTS

Case Number: 12CR2791-JAH

Tony Lomeli	Age: 43	San Diego, CA	Arrested 7/17/12
David Ulloa	Age: 36	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/2/12
Veronica Ojeda	Age: 24	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/2/12
Carlos Ponce-Ramirez	Age: 37	Spring Valley, CA	Arrested 7/17/12
Daniel Anthony Quenga	Age: 42	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/4/12
Michael Stroehlein	Age: 45	El Cajon, CA	Arrested 10/12/12
Marco Antonio Hernandez	Age: 30	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/5/12
Andrea Osuna	Age: 18	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/5/12
John Pross	Age: 52	Spring Valley, CA	Arrested 10/3/12
Ernest Henry Garibay	Age: 32	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/2/12
William Robert Elmenhorst	Age: 26	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/15/12
D'Angelo Nicolas Quenga	Age: 21	San Ysidro, CA	Arrested 10/15/12
Luis Vasquez	Age: 30	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/4/12
Manuel Luzanilla-Machado	Age: 55	National City, CA	Arrested 10/15/12
Nelida Carina Huerta	Age: 36	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/2/12
David Wilson	Age: 53	Boulevard, CA	Arrested 10/4/2012
Leona Michelle Houston	Age: 37	San Ysidro, CA	Arrested 10/3/12
Jose Enrique Hernandez	Age: 35	National City, CA	Arrested 10/15/12

Summary of Charges

Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1) and 846 - Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine (all defendants); Maximum Penalties: Life in Custody; Minimum Custody: 10 years; Maximum Fine: \$4 million

Title 21, United States Code, Section 841(a)(1) - Possession of Methamphetamine With Intent To Distribute (Ulloa and Luzanilla-Machado only); Maximum Penalties: Life in Custody; Minimum Custody: 10 years; Maximum Fine: \$4 million

Title 18, United States Code, Sections 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2) - Felon in Possession of a Firearm (Lomeli and Ponce-Ramirez only); Maximum 10 years in custody

Case Number: 12CR3850-JAH

Norman Punsalan Nooris	Age: 41	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/2/12
Luis Ocampo-Estrada aka Luis Enrique Ocampo	Age: 40	National City, CA	FUGITIVE
Yeng Yang	Age: 32	San Diego, CA	(State Custody)
Donald Carl Garland	Age: 42	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/4/12
Kyle Eder	Age: 23	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/5/12
Louis Van Phan	Age: 29	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/3/12
Scott Randall Horine	Age: 50	San Diego, CA	Arrested 3/28/12
Anthony William Harvey	Age: 28	San Diego, CA	(State Custody)
Delanie Paz Manuel	Age: 42	Santee, CA	Arrested 10/4/12
James Oneal Jr.	Age: 40	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/9/12
Cesar Rodriguez	Age: 32	Vista, CA	Arrested 10/4/12
Shoshana Christie Elias	Age: 30	Poway, CA	Arrested 10/5/12

Summary of Charges

Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1) and 846 - Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine (All defendants); Maximum Penalties: Life in Custody; Minimum Custody: 10 years; Maximum Fine: \$4 million

Title 21, United States Code, Section 841(a)(1) - Possession of Methamphetamine With Intent To Distribute (Harvey and Horine only); Maximum Penalties: Life in Custody; Minimum Custody: 10 years; Maximum Fine: \$4 million

Title 18, United States Code, Sections 922(g)(1) and 924(a)(2) - Felon in Possession of a Firearm (Horine only) Maximum penalty 10 years in custody.

Case Number: 12CR4032-JAH

Hao Duc Tang	Age: 37	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/3/12
Michael Anthony Valenzuela	Age: 33	Chula Vista, CA	Arrested 10/4/12
Son Vinh Nguyen	Age: 46	Escondido, CA	FUGITIVE
Muriel Dee Burless	Age: 29	Escondido, CA	FUGITIVE
Michael Edward Dowling	Age: 41	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/3/12
Richard Abram Elliot	Age: 43	Lemon Grove, CA	Arrested 10/4/12
Sengkham Koulavongsa	Age: 39	San Diego, CA	Arrested 10/12/12

Summary of Charges

Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1) and 846 - Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine and Heroin; Maximum Penalties: Life in Custody; Minimum Custody: 10 years; Maximum Fine: \$4 million

AGENCIES

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations
San Diego Police Department
San Diego County Sheriff's Department
Drug Enforcement Agency
United States Border Patrol
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

An indictment or complaint itself is not evidence that the defendants committed the crimes charged. The defendants are presumed innocent until the Government meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

